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A Librarian's View.

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Accompanying the great awakening of interest in American municipal affairs in the last two decades, and in some places anticipating it, American public and university libraries have been accumulating collections of the official documents of representative municipalities, a field of literary output long neglected. In addition to the ordinary citizen, the student or city official who may find these documents of use, this "civic awakening" has in the last half dozen years produced both the municipal reference library and the bureau of municipal research, two institutions which have great need for good libraries of this type.

During this same period, however, the improvement in the form of publication, both of individual documents and the collected documents of cities, from the standpoint of reference use, has by no means kept pace with the demand for the documents themselves. Even the problems of distribution and local preservation have not received the attention they deserve, except in a few scattered instances, despite the necessity for at least local preservation and the great desirability of having a responsible and permanent distributing office and exchange for the benefit of officials and libraries in other municipalities.

A study of the manner of publishing and distributing municipal documents and also an examination of the form in which the volumes of collected city documents are published may prove profitable.

First, there is great lack of uniformity among our cities with regard to almost all questions relating to the publication and distribution of both the separate and collected reports of municipal officers. Specific inquiry among the cities themselves reveals this. Take, for example, the question of publishing and financing the separate departmental reports. In New York City this is in the hands of the Board of city record consisting of the mayor, corporation counsel and comptroller. The executive officer of the board is termed the Supervisor of the city record. The funds by which these department reports are financed are a part of the general fund for city printing appropriated to this board. San Francisco puts the burden of expense on the general fund of the Board of Supervisors, the legislative branch of the city government, which has jurisdiction over all city printing. Similarly, in Cleveland the City council has control, and departmental

printing at city expense must be authorized by it. In Grand Rapids the City clerk handles the publication, also through general funds.

In numerous places, however, departmental printing is paid for out of departmental funds, in some cases from specific printing funds, in others from general maintenance funds. In Chicago and Milwaukee, departments have a specific printing fund. In Boston, St. Louis, Kansas City and Newark general department funds meet the expense.

In most of the above named cities, the separate departments either by law or by courtesy, control the distribution of their separate reports. A Boston ordinance provides that the City messenger "shall have the care, custody, and distribution of all documents pamphlets, and books printed for the City council." But by courtesy, departments control the distribution of any number of copies they desire. The San Francisco situation is similar, the Clerk of the Board of supervisors being legally in control. In the other cities, the departments themselves control this matter except where there is a municipal reference department or a municipal reference library. Where that is the case it usually becomes a central distributing agency and by exchange with other cities acquires a collection of municipal documents for comparative research purposes.

Such is the case with the Kansas City Municipal reference library, which is made an exchange agency by the ordinance creating it, and with the Municipal reference library of Chicago which came under the jurisdiction of the Public library of that city by ordinance March 31, 1913. In Milwaukee, apparently, no one is specifically authorized to distribute reports, the departments doing whatever distribution is done, but the Municipal reference library expects eventually to acquire this function. When the Municipal reference department of the Cleveland Public library is further developed, it will doubtless be able to assume a similar function for Cleveland.

The bound volumes of collected municipal reports, in contrast with the separate departmental reports just discussed, are usually issued by the city clerk, or some equivalent officer, and their publication financed from general funds. In St. Louis, the cost is provided for in the annual appropriation ordinance by the comptroller; in San Francisco by the general fund of the Board of supervisors; in Cleveland through authorized expenditure by the City clerk, and similarly in Newark and Grand Rapids.

The City messenger distributes them in Boston; while in St. Louis the Municipal reference library, by arrangement with the City register's office, performs this duty.

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In San Francisco the Clerk of the Board, and in Cleveland and Newark, the City clerk distributes. In Newark, however, this is actually done by a branch of the City clerk's office which has charge of the Municipal reference library, located in the city hall. Again, in Kansas City, the Municipal reference library and in Grand Rapids the Public library are the distributing agencies for the collected documents

Uniformity in all these matters may not be essential and general rules suitable to all cities regarding the manner of publishing and financing the publication of city documents cannot be formulated. One thing is certain, however, and that is that there should be a responsible and permanent central distributing agency, preferably one interested in the work and taking advantage of its function as such to acquire by exchange with other cities, a library of municipal documents. The Municipal reference library is the logical place to locate such responsibility, and has been urged for the place for some time by the National municipal league.

In cities lacking such an institution, the Public library should endeavor to acquire the responsibility. Opposition to such an attempt may be expected from departments which feel that some authority over their own property is being taken from them; but this should be overcome by making them understand that simply the physical burden of distributing is being taken from them and that the reports are as much at their disposal as formerly. Department mailing lists will still be maintained. This would be quite in harmony with the suggestions of the President's Commission on economy and efficiency concerning the distribution of the reports of the various offices of the United States Government. Its recommendations were that the distribution of federal documents of all kinds be centralized in the office of the Superintendent of documents, an office well equipped to assume such a duty.

Turning now to the form of publication of collected city documents what do we find? Let us examine those of four typical cities with a view to suggesting possible improvements in form only. The cities selected are of varying sizes and are selected at random, though a more extended comparative study shows that they may be regarded as indeed typical. The documents of Bangor (Maine), Cambridge (Massachusetts), Boston and Cleveland will serve our purpose.

The collected documents of Bangor (population 24,803 in 1910), for the fiscal year 1911-1912, form a continuously paged octavo volume of 399 pages, bound in dark green cloth and exhibiting a good quality of press work on paper fairly well suited to its task. The title-page signifies that

within are the Mayor's address, the annual reports of the several departments, and the receipts and expenditures for the municipal year 1911-1912. No table of contents is given. Preceding even the Mayor's address is a page showing the Bangor city government 1911-1912 on which appear the names of the mayor, city clerk and clerk of board, aldermen and common councilmen, by wards. The separate reports then follow in no discoverable order and have in no instance, individual table of contents or index. Following the last report is a directory of the city government for 1912-1913, complete, including even a table of salaries. A three-page index—single column—closes the volume.

Considering form only, without regard to data presented, several things seem obvious. A table of contents to the whole should certainly be furnished; and the separate reports should be arranged in some definite order. Add a consecutive number to the documents, thus arranged and you have a convenient method of citation by merely referring to Doc.26:1912. Further, each separate report should have its table of contents and index unless the final volume-index is made in sufficient detail to cover each document analytically—which in this particular case it is not. This volume being paged consecutively at the usual place for page number, the paging of each separate report as originally issued should be printed at the bottom so that a given reference may be found no matter which form of paging is cited. An occasional illustration would add value.

Some of the same criticisms apply equally well to the Mayor's address at the organization of the city government, April 3, 1911 and the annual reports made to the city council for the year ending March 31, 1911, under which title appears a recent volume of the collected documents of Cambridge, Mass., (a city of 104,839 population at the last census.

In this volume the Mayor's address is evidently considered an introductory document, being paged I-XXI. The first Report follows that of the School Commissioner, a document of 91 pages, with an individual table of contents. This last distinction is attained by none other of the documents forming the total 693 pages of reports.

In an appendix following these reports are printed the ordinances passed between April 1, 1910, and April 1, 1911, and the amendments to the standing regulations of the Board of aldermen. Next come lists of the Mayors of Cambridge from 1846 to 1911, the Presidents of the Board of aldermen and Common council, diagrams of the Aldermanic and Common council chambers, a directory of the alderman, councilmen, their committees, and the various departments and officials of the city—all pre-

sented under the appropriate running title of Municipal register. A table of votes cast at all state and city elections held between November 8, 1910 and March 14, 1911 concludes the appendix. The **Contents** at the end of the volume is virtually an index, covering first, rather minutely, and by specific topics alphabetically arranged, the auditor's report, then presenting in alphabetical order the general subjects of the other documents. There is no real **table of contents** showing the order of topics either to the whole volume or any of its constituent parts. Nor does any one of these parts have its separate index, except as the general index furnishes first a specific index to the auditor's report, as just noted.

Turning to our "Sixth city" numbering 560,663 in 1910, we find that Cleveland's **Annual reports of the departments of government of the City of Cleveland for the year ending December 31, 1910** form a bulky and somewhat unsubstantial volume of an unknown number of pages. The separate reports, called "divisions," are separately paged, numbered 1-20, and arranged in numerical order. The beginning of each division in the volume is discoverable by a labelled thumb-mark similar to the A, B, C, thumb-marks on the face of a large dictionary. Preliminary pages give a register of municipal officers. The table of contents notes the twenty divisions in 1, 2, 3, order. A detailed index of ten pages precedes the auditor's report and a table of contents is given to the report of the water works department. No general index to the volume as a whole is furnished and valuable reports of important departments cannot be located where the department reporting happens to be a part only of one of the larger divisions mentioned in the contents. The paper is too heavy; the binding is too weak, strong cloth being preferable to weak leather.

Boston with a population of 670,585, is a little more successful, though there is still room for improvement. For a number of years its reports have filled two, and sometimes three, thick volumes, called parts, each with separate table of contents. This table shows that Boston documents are arranged alphabetically by the names of the departments reporting and thus arranged a consecutive number is assigned running through both or all three of the volumes. Moreover, the contents of each volume (or part) is plainly printed on a black label on the back of each volume. The printing and paper are good, the work being done at the municipal printing office. The individual documents are separately paged and, as a rule, like the previous examples, have neither table of contents nor index, though here again the auditor's report of 333 pages is an exception. It has a de-

tailed, double-column index of six and one quarter pages. Boston documents may be conveniently referred to by number and year, i.e., **Doc. 2—1907**; the year being the year in which the report was made, not the year covered by the report, and not necessarily the year in which the collected documents were published. For example, the reports covering 1906 were presented in 1907, but the volume of collected documents bears the imprint date 1908.

For a number of years the Boston documents included in the final volume, usually three, a brief alphabetical index to all the collected volumes for that year.

Special attention must be called to the general indexes covering the collected documents of Boston for a long series of years, indexes which are almost unique in their field. They have been published as follows and cover the years indicated in the first column:

1834-1874, published in City Docs., 1874, Vol. 1.

1834-1830, published in City Docs., 1880, Vol. 1.

1834-1886, published in City Docs., 1886, Vol. 1.

1834-1891 with an appendix containing a list of publications not included among the numbered documents. Bost. Rockwell & Churchill, 1891. 120 p.

(1834-1891) A list of documents not serially numbered prior to 1891. Appendix to index to documents. Bost. 1894.

1834-1897, with an appendix ... of ... publications not included among the numbered documents. 142 p. Bost. 1897.

Numerous references have been made in recent years to the inadequacy and meaninglessness of the average city document. But, even without the improvement in data which is more and more noticeable, city documents should be viewed as historical records and published and preserved with the care due such records.

Good book-making would seem to demand at least the following points:

Begin with a title-page. Let it indicate the compiler, if any, the place of publication, publisher or printer, and date. Let the title state specifically the period covered by the reports. Follow this with a good table of contents to the whole volume. It should show not only the order in which the reports appear, but also the names of all important subordinate divisions of departments which have reports of division heads published within the full report of the department.

Let the reports be arranged in a definite order by the name of the department reporting and be consecutively numbered as thus arranged. An alphabetical arrangement is the simplest and always a feasible plan; but in many cases, a grouping of

closely related departments might be more satisfactory. The paging of the separate reports should be preserved and a continuous paging for the volume added.

The separate reports should each have a table of contents noting all officers reporting therein. For any but the shortest an index should be provided. At the end of the volume should appear an analytical and detailed index to the entire contents. Good index-making requires care, thought and experience. Yet there are printed helps for the guidance of the inexperienced indexer compelled to do this work. Also, there are experts who for a reasonable charge will compile an index satisfactory in every respect.

Good paper should be demanded, not only paper that makes a good appearance at first, but paper that will withstand the

ravages of time. Among others a committee of the American library association has studied for some time the question of paper suitable to receive the impress of what should be imperishable records. Good press-work should be insisted upon and a substantial cloth binding demanded, for it is more suitable than leather for the preservation of books not subjected to frequent handling. The present binding of the United States Government documents is a choice made after long study of the question by qualified experts and experimenters.

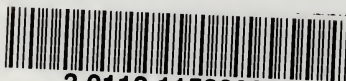
The historian has found public documents a precious heritage. Let those of us who are preparing today the heritage of tomorrow bequeath it to him in a form, if not always in content, such that his faith in our degree of civilization need not be shaken.



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